

U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
White River Field Office
73544 Hwy 64
Meeker, CO 81641

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

NUMBER: CO-110-2005-001-EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER (optional): COC67995

PROJECT NAME: Gardenhire Repeater Site & Access Road

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Sixth Principal Meridian, Colorado
T. 2 S., R. 96 W.,
Sec. 8, lot 6, 7, 11, 14;
Sec. 17, lot 3, 6, 10, 11, 15;
Sec. 20, lot 2, 3.

APPLICANT: EnCana Gathering Services (USA) Inc.

ISSUES AND CONCERNS (optional):

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES:

Background/Introduction: EnCana Gathering Services has applied for an access road and repeater site to improve field communications.

Proposed Action: The proposed action is for the placement of a repeater facility at the top of Gardenhire Gulch. The facility will be a 12 foot tall repeater tower set in a cement filled rubber tire and will occupy approximately 5 square feet. The access road is an existing two track that goes down the ridge to the proposed site. No improvement of the two track is required. A flagged survey has been established along the proposed route. The survey route is the shortest, most direct route to the site and will minimize damage to public lands.

This action will be authorized under Section 28 of the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920, as amended (30 U.S.C. 185). A term of 30 years has been requested.

No Action Alternative: Under the no action alternative, the application would be denied and a different site would have to be selected.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD:

NEED FOR THE ACTION: An application has been received for an access road and repeater site to improve field communications.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with the following plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3):

Name of Plan: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Pages 2-49 thru 2-52

Decision Language: “To make public lands available for the siting of public and private facilities through the issuance of applicable land use authorizations, in a manner that provides for reasonable protection of other resource values.”

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES / MITIGATION MEASURES:

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH: In January 1997, Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands. Because a standard exists for these five categories, a finding must be made for each of them in an environmental analysis. These findings are located in specific elements listed below:

CRITICAL ELEMENTS

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The proposed repeater site appears to be located in an area that has been inventoried at the Class III (100% pedestrian) level (Hauck 2001, Compliance Dated 6/11/2001) with no new cultural resources identified in the inventory area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would not impact any known cultural resources.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no new impacts to cultural resources under the No Action Alternative.

Mitigation: 1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing

historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to proceed by the authorized officer.

INVASIVE, NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: Noxious/problem weeds known to occur near the project area include black henbane, houndstongue, Russian, spotted and diffuse knapweed, yellow toadflax, bull thistle and mullein. The invasive annual cheatgrass is also present in the area primarily associated with disturbed, unvegetated areas.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed project will create minor soil disturbance which if it is not revegetated could provide safe sites for the establishment and proliferation of noxious weeds and cheatgrass.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There will be no change from the present situation.

Mitigation: Promptly revegetate all disturbed areas with Native Seed mixture # 3. Eradicate all noxious weeds and invasive species using materials and methods approved in advance by the authorized officer.

3	Western wheatgrass (Rosanna)	2	Gravelly 10"-14", Pinyon/Juniper Woodland, Stony Foothills, 147 (Mountain Mahogany)
	Bluebunch wheatgrass (Secar, Whitmar)	2	
	Thickspike wheatgrass (Critana)	2	
	Indian ricegrass (Rimrock, Nezpar)	1	
	Fourwing saltbush (Wytana)	1	
	Utah sweetvetch	1	

WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

Affected Environment: There are no known hazardous or other solid wastes on the subject lands. No hazardous materials are known to have been used, stored or disposed of at sites included in the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: No listed or extremely hazardous materials in excess of threshold quantities are proposed for use in this project. While commercial preparations of fuels and lubricants proposed for use may contain some hazardous constituents, they would be stored, used and transported in a manner consistent with applicable laws, and the generation of hazardous wastes would not be anticipated. Solid wastes would be properly disposed of.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: No hazardous or other solid wastes would be generated under the no-action alternative.

Mitigation: The operator shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed actions.

CRITICAL ELEMENTS NOT PRESENT OR NOT AFFECTED:

No ACEC's, flood plains, riparian or wetland systems, prime and unique farmlands, Wild and Scenic Rivers or threatened, endangered or sensitive plant and animal species exist within the area affected by the proposed action. This action is not expected to have any impact upon migratory birds (see terrestrial wildlife section). Impacts to water quality are not anticipated; currently water quality meets the Land Health Standards and would continue to meet the standard as a result of the proposed action. The Public Land Health Standard for wetland or riparian systems is not applicable to this action, since neither the proposed or no-action alternative would have any influence on riparian habitats. There is no reasonable likelihood that the proposed action or no action alternative would have an influence on individuals or populations of special status species, or the condition or function of habitat for Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive plant and animal species. Thus, there would be no effect on achieving applicable land health standards. There are also no Native American religious or environmental justice concerns associated with the proposed action.

NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

The following elements **must** be addressed due to the involvement of Standards for Public Land Health:

SOILS (includes a finding on Standard 1)

Affected Environment: The soils have been mapped in an order III soil survey by NRCS and are available from the office for review. Refer to the table below for the type of soils affected by the proposed action.

Soil Number	Soil Name	Slope	Range site	Salinity	Run Off	Erosion Potential	Bedrock
5	Badland	50-100%	None		Very rapid	Very high	0-10
15	Castner channery loam	5-50%	Pinyon-Juniper woodlands	<2	Medium to rapid	Moderate/very high	10-20
43	Irigul-Parachute complex	12-45%5-30%	Loamy Slopes/Mountain Loam	<2	Rapid	Slight to high	10-20
70	Redcreek-Rentsac complex	5-30%	PJ woodlands/PJ woodlands	<2	Very high	Moderate to high	10-20
96	Veatch channery loam	12-50%	Loamy Slopes	<2	Medium	Moderate/very high	20-40

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: Short-term impacts would be expected from any surface disturbing activity. Impacts from the proposed action would be compaction of the protective vegetation cover, from placement of the repeater stations. These impacts would be very short term.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: In the no-action alternative, neither the surface disturbance nor the impacts to soils resources would occur.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for upland soils: The proposed action will not affect the soils ability to meet the Land Health Standard.

VEGETATION (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The proposed repeater site is located in an area dominated by pinyon-juniper woodland with a mixed grass/browse understory.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: There will be minor disturbance to the existing plant community, which if it is revegetated, will result in no significant negative impact.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There will be no change from the present situation

Mitigation: Promptly revegetate all disturbed areas with Native Seed mixture # 3. Eradicate all noxious weeds and invasive species using materials and methods approved in advance by the authorized officer.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Wildlife, Aquatic and Wildlife, Terrestrial): Plant communities in the project area currently meet the Standard and could be expected to continue to meet the Standard following implementation of this project.

WILDLIFE, AQUATIC (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: There is no aquatic wildlife within the project area.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: None.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: None.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Terrestrial): There is no aquatic wildlife within the project area. Therefore, this standard is not applicable.

WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL (includes a finding on Standard 3)

Affected Environment: The project area is occupied by big game during the late fall through middle spring months. A number of raptors nest in surrounding pinyon-juniper woodlands, including Cooper's, sharp-shinned, and red-tailed hawks. No nests are known to be located in close proximity to the proposed location, and it would be unlikely that a functional nest would be sited in close proximity (e.g., within 100 feet) to an existing road. Other small mammals and birds using this area are typical and widely distributed in extensive like habitats across the Resource Area and northwest Colorado; there are no narrowly endemic or highly specialized species known to inhabit those lands potentially influenced by this action.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would involve no surface disturbance or construction activity and would not represent an ongoing source of disturbance. There is no reasonable likelihood that the facility would have any discernible influence on resident wildlife populations or habitat conditions.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no action authorized that would have potential to influence terrestrial animal populations or associated habitats.

Mitigation: None.

Finding on the Public Land Health Standard for plant and animal communities (partial, see also Vegetation and Wildlife, Aquatic): The lands surrounding the proposed facility site currently meet the Land Health Standards for terrestrial wildlife. Installation and occupation of the proposed site would have no short or long-term influence on terrestrial wildlife populations or associated habitats and therefore would not interfere with continued meeting of the standard. The no-action alternative would similarly have no influence on continued meeting of the standard.

OTHER NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS: For the following elements, only those brought forward for analysis will be addressed further.

Non-Critical Element	NA or Not Present	Applicable or Present, No Impact	Applicable & Present and Brought Forward for Analysis
Access and Transportation		X	
Cadastral Survey	X		
Fire Management		X	
Forest Management	X		
Geology and Minerals	X		
Hydrology/Water Rights	X		
Law Enforcement		X	
Noise	X		
Paleontology		X	
Rangeland Management		X	
Realty Authorizations		X	
Recreation		X	
Socio-Economics		X	
Visual Resources			X
Wild Horses	X		

VISUAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: The proposed action is located within a VRM class III area. The objective of this class is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to the characteristic landscape should be moderate. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of the casual observer. Changes should repeat the basic elements found in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action: The proposed action would be located on top of a ridge approximately two miles from RBC 5 (Piceance Creek Road), which is the route that would most likely be traveled by a casual observer. Since the communication structure is only 12 feet tall and would be located with a backdrop of pinyon/juniper trees, the antennae should not attract the attention of a casual observer, and certainly should not dominate the view. By painting the structure Juniper Green to blend with the background, the level of change to the characteristic landscape would be low, and the objectives of the VRM III classification would be retained.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative: There would be no additional environmental consequences.

Mitigation: Paint all facilities Juniper Green.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS SUMMARY: This action is consistent with the scope of impacts addressed in the White River ROD/RMP. The cumulative impacts of these activities are addressed in the White River ROD/RMP for each resource value that would be affected by the proposed action.

REFERENCES CITED

Hauck, F. Richard

2001 Cultural Resource Evaluation of Proposed Well Locations & Pipeline Corridors in the Magnolia Locality of Rio Blanco County, Colorado. Archeological-Environmental Research Corporation, Bountiful, Utah.

PERSONS / AGENCIES CONSULTED:

INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility
Caroline Hollowed	Hydrologist	Air Quality
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
Tamara Meagley	Natural Resource Specialist	Threatened and Endangered Plant Species
Michael Selle	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources Paleontological Resources
Mark Hafkenschiel	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Animal Species, Wildlife
Bo Brown	Hazmat Collateral	Wastes, Hazardous or Solid
Caroline Hollowed	Hydrologist	Water Quality, Surface and Ground Hydrology and Water Rights
Caroline Hollowed	Hydrologist	Wetlands and Riparian Zones
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness
Caroline Hollowed	Hydrologist	Soils
Mark Hafkenschiel	Rangeland Management Specialist	Vegetation
Ed Hollowed	Wildlife Biologist	Wildlife Terrestrial and Aquatic
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Access and Transportation
Ken Holsinger	Natural Resource Specialist	Fire Management
Robert Fowler	Forester	Forest Management
Paul Daggett	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals
Mark Hafkenschiel	Rangeland Management Specialist	Rangeland Management
Penny Brown	Realty Specialist	Realty Authorizations
Chris Ham	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation
Keith Whitaker	Natural Resource Specialist	Visual Resources
Valerie Dobrich	Natural Resource Specialist	Wild Horses

Finding of No Significant Impact/Decision Record (FONSI/DR)

CO-110-2005-001-EA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)/RATIONALE: The environmental assessment and analyzing the environmental effects of the proposed action have been reviewed. The approved mitigation measures (listed below) result in a Finding of No Significant Impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action.

DECISION/RATIONALE: It is my decision to approve the proposed action with the mitigation measures listed below.

MITIGATION MEASURES:

1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

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4. The operator shall be required to collect and properly dispose of any solid wastes generated by the proposed action.

5. All above ground facilities shall be painted Juniper Green.

COMPLIANCE/MONITORING: Compliance will be conducted by the realty staff every five years.

NAME OF PREPARER: Penny Brown

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Caroline Hollowed

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: 
Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 12/17/04

ATTACHMENTS: Location map of the proposed action.

Location of Proposed Action CO-110-2005-001-EA

